

**Remarks**  
**Ambassador D. Brent Hardt**  
**22<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary Dinner - Food for The Poor**  
**June 29, 2013, 7:00p.m.**  
**Pegasus Hotel, Georgetown, Guyana**

I am honored to be here with you to celebrate 22 years of amazing work by Food for the Poor in Guyana to help those most in need of a helping hand. Food for the Poor embodies some of the core values that Americans hold dear – philanthropy, selflessness, and compassion.

As United States Ambassador to Guyana, I represent our president and my government, but I also have the good fortune to represent the American people. And it is really the American people whose generosity and partnership with Guyana and other countries in the Caribbean and Central American that we are in part recognizing this evening.

The international efforts of the United States to combat poverty, hunger and disease, provide humanitarian relief, and respond to natural disasters are well known. The United States is spending USD23 billion this year to advance global development. Our Global Health Initiative, which includes our efforts to combat HIV and AIDS in Guyana, is working to help partner countries improve health

outcomes for their people. We seek in particular to bolster the health of women, newborns, and children by combating infectious diseases and providing quality health services. Our funding to combat global climate change seeks to help the most vulnerable countries respond to the growing impacts of climate change, speed the world's transition to a low-carbon economy, and help forge a global solution to the climate crisis. Feed the Future, our global hunger and food security initiative, addresses the root causes of global hunger through accelerated agricultural development and improved nutrition. We are working around the globe to catalyze agricultural-led growth to raise the incomes of the poor, increase the availability of food, and reduce malnutrition through sustained, long-term development. We are also active in education and social services, democracy and governance, and peace and security.

I have seen the impact of these programs in many places and can attest that our support is having a positive impact on the lives of many of the world's poorest, while supporting the structural changes that can lead to lasting development.

But what I have come to admire more and more in my various overseas postings is the work that the American people do in countries throughout the world, usually in partnership with local groups and individuals. Every place I have

been I have had the pleasure of meeting church groups, doctors, students, athletes, retirees, members of the Diaspora and many more, who have decided to travel to countries and donate their time, energy, skills, talents, and resources to help others.

And while our official government efforts worldwide are impressive, they are often dwarfed by the efforts, contributions, and engagement of ordinary Americans, who are directly involved with their donations, advocacy, and volunteer work. Our level of personal giving is far beyond that of any other developed country. Interestingly, when calculated as a percentage of income, people at lower income levels are actually the most charitable. Of all the charitable donations made in the United States, 73 percent comes from individuals, in amounts both big and small. Though much of this supports domestic charities, international donations are the fastest growing area – accounting for eight percent of all U.S. donations. This support is organized and channeled in different forms, including non-governmental organizations, foundations, religious organizations, Diaspora associations, the private sector, academia and individual U.S. citizens. According to a report from the Giving USA Foundation and the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, the total charitable contributions by individuals, corporations, and foundations to foreign and domestic causes was almost \$300 billion in 2011.

One of the most active and effective groups of Americans active overseas are our Diaspora communities. These recent immigrants offer unique expertise, insight, and personal commitment, while bringing language and cultural familiarity to bear on their engagement. They understand business opportunities and risks in their home countries. They may be able to call on personal and professional networks in their country of origin. For Americans of the Diaspora, development of their countries of origin is intrinsic and personal, not simply a remote policy issue. Supporting higher living standards, economic growth, and political stability in their countries of origin or heritage is about helping their friends and families. That is why many Guyanese-Americans maintain close ties to their homeland, family and friends, often providing significant financial or professional support to their country of origin.

The Diaspora connection is, of course, relevant in connect with Food for the Poor, an inter-denominational Christian ministry founded in 1982 by Ferdinand Mahfood, and is now led by Robin Mahfood. The Mahfood family emigrated to the United States from Jamaica. And while they achieved much as new immigrants, they decided they could do much more to support people back in Jamaica and other countries in the Caribbean and Central America. Since its

founding, it has distributed over \$10 billion in food and other supplies to people in need in 17 countries. It builds homes for homeless families, supplies medicine and health care in hospitals and clinics, subsidizes orphanages, provides fresh water, encourages micro-enterprise, and teaches children and adults by providing knowledge and training. Food For The Poor has in fact become in this short time the largest international relief and development organization in the United States.

Food For The Poor began working in Guyana in 1991, delivering food and other basic items to Guyana's poor. Since then, the South Florida-based nonprofit has expended its services here to meet the growing needs of the country's neediest citizens. It is now the leading organization providing relief to the people of Guyana, providing the equivalent of \$54 million dollars in support annually -- a figure that I note is considerable higher than official U.S. government assistance, and which is an extraordinary reflect of the generosity of the American people.

Of course, the many donations and contributions would never make it to those in need without effective local partners in each country. I had the privilege last month of visiting the Guyana headquarters of Food for the Poor and meeting Kent Vincent, Paul Chan-A-Sue and most of the dedicated staff working there in

the warehouse, accounting, and many other departments. It was impressive to see how much this small band of committed individuals is able to accomplish.

Indeed, they have accomplished a great deal. In 2012, they constructed the Hosanna Village in Essequibo; they developed 40 homes and a water project for Swan Village; they have over the years built 3,024 housing units; delivered more than 800 computer workstations to the newly built technology and reading room at Montrose Primary School; partnered with eight orphanages as part of the Angels of Hope program, where 217 children receive shelter and an education; and distributed ten marching band sets with 40 instruments to schools. Through the Prison Ministry Program they have assisted in freeing, training, and reintroducing non-violent prisoners back into the community as productive citizens for Christmas and Easter.

All of this is possible thanks to the extraordinary partnership between individual American citizens willing to donate their resources and the tireless on the ground work and advocacy of Food For The Poor members in Guyana to transform that goodwill into tangible relief. It is the kind of partnership that best reflects the close ties between our countries and our people. On behalf of the United States, I wish to convey my appreciation and admiration for your dedication

to making life better for your fellow citizens and to strengthening communities throughout Guyana.

With private assistance increasing at an unprecedented rate in recent years, I am confident that we will have more of these kinds of partnerships in the years ahead. Indeed, Food For The Poor is not the only U.S. NGO operating in Guyana – we have also seen excellent work from Habitat for Humanity, Builders Beyond Borders, and many others.

Other faith-based organizations are also making their contributions to Guyana's development. Just this month we saw a visit from students and lecturers of the Loma Linda University, a Seventh-day Adventist educational health-sciences institution located in Southern California. They took part in a massive medical outreach targeting more than 1,000 across Guyana, focusing primarily on dental care, but also providing primary care services.

In mid-June, hundreds of U.S.-based Guyanese participated in a fun day organized by the TCJ Seva Foundation in New York, with musical entertainment and cricket matches to raise funds to provide school supplies, sporting equipment, clothing, and medical equipment to the communities in Tain, Clifton, and John.

The TCJ Seva Foundation consists of past members of of Tain Hindu Mandir and the Tain Hindu Youth Organization residing in the United States.

Catholic Relief Services has also been active in Guyana, partnering with the Diocese of Georgetown and other partners, primarily on HIV and AIDS programs, civil society projects, emergency response, and capacity building for the diocese. All of these organizations that give to Guyana are made up of dedicated individuals who want to make a difference. Taken together the actions of these many groups and individuals is making a difference.

Guyanese-American organizations also pool their resources from fundraising and make generous donations of money, food, clothing, and equipment to Guyanese orphanages, schools, and hospitals. According to a 2003 Inter-American Dialogue report, there were 110 Guyanese associations in the United States – predominantly philanthropic groups offering charitable assistance.

I have encountered many heartwarming examples demonstrating the incredible goodwill of the groups and the individual citizens of the United States and Guyana. The number and scope of charitable activities that I see happening all

around Guyana give me great hope for the future of Guyana. There are too many acts of generosity and benevolence to mention, but all make a difference.

American author, political activist, and lecturer, Helen Keller once said “I am only one; but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; I will not refuse to do the something I can do.” In that spirit, I would like to commend all of you and the extraordinary work you do day in and day out in partnership with thousands of generous Americans. Thank you.